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BRONZE-RELIEFS FROM THE ACROPOLIS OF ATHENS.*

Since strips of bronze used for decorative purposes and consisting of squares arranged one over the other, each containing a design, were brought to the knowledge of archæologists by those discovered at Olympia, which on the indication of their inscriptions were rightly assumed by Furtwängler to be related to Argos, similar strips have been observed also in other places.¹ It has long been known that the acropolis at Athens was one of the places where these bronze-reliefs were found, but the single strip (No. I) briefly described by Reisch² is not the only discovery of this kind. Even when the smaller objects last excavated were as yet mostly unexamined, I had recognized a badly-disfigured fragment of a second similar strip, which has since been cleaned with the other bronzes of the Acropolis (No. II). Meanwhile, A. G. Bather's gleaning among the bronze fragments of the Acropolis has yielded a few similar smaller fragments, which he has mostly kindly offered to me to complete my long-intended and long-deferred publication. If I now finally undertake to fulfil the promise made by him in my name (*JHS*, XIII, pp. 249. 255), I can restrict myself to giving my observations written down long ago on the actual state of the fragments, because I am glad to say that A. de Ridder intends to treat this whole class of monuments in an exhaustive manner.³

I. (National Museum, 6965. De Ridder, No. 350). FIGURE 1. Compare above note 2. Reisch's account of its discovery is erroneous, for there can be no doubt that the strip is identical with

* Republished from the *Athen. Mittheilungen*, XX, p. 473, with the permission of the German arch. Institute. The translation is by Henrietta Ricketts, revised by the author, who made some slight additions.

¹ Cf. FURTWÄNGLER, *Bronzefunde aus Olympia*, p. 91; *Olympia*, IV (*Die Bronzen*) pp. 101, 69 sqq.; *Arch. Anzeiger*, 1894, p. 117; CARAPANOS, *Dodone*, pl. 16; *BCH*, 1892, p. 347 (M. HOLLEAUX); 1895 p. 218 (A. DE RIDDER); *JHS*, XIII, p. 249 (A. G. BATHER); *Ἐφημερίς ἀρχ.*, 1892, p. 238.

² *Athen. Mittheilungen*, 1887, p. 123, 3; cf. *Olympia*, IV, p. 103.

³ *BCH*, 1895, p. 218, 7: *Bronzes trouvés sur l'Acropole*, p. XVII.

one described by Pervanoglu in the *Bullettino* (1867, p. 75) as "a piece of a very thin strip on which are stamped various archaic designs, divided into squares; there are two sphinxes, Herakles with the lion, men fighting with a fallen woman, a winged figure." From this we learn that the relief, as well as the bronze head, De Ridder, No. 767 (*Athen. Mittheilungen*, 1887, p. 373), mentioned there likewise, together with so many other archaic bits, were found during the excavation for the Acropolis Museum in 1866.

Present length, 19 cm.; breadth, 7 cm.; a narrow edge ($1\frac{1}{2}$ mm.), which projected beyond the lateral ornamentation, was bent back perpendicularly to the front surface; the wooden frame on which this strip was nailed consequently was exactly 7 cm. wide, and the metal overlapped its sides a little. Of the topmost square nothing but the lower part is preserved. We can recognize the legs of two men, facing each other and fighting; the one on the right has fallen on his knees. No weapons

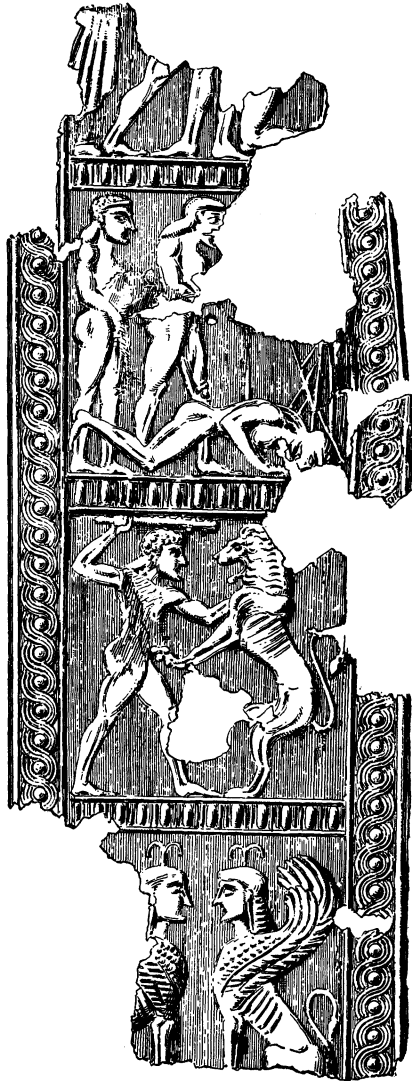


FIGURE 1.

appear, but to the left is seen a garment which cannot belong to the combatants. A tiny remainder in the left corner looks like a human foot, and we may venture to imagine the rest of a clothed figure turned to the right, although we cannot be certain of any

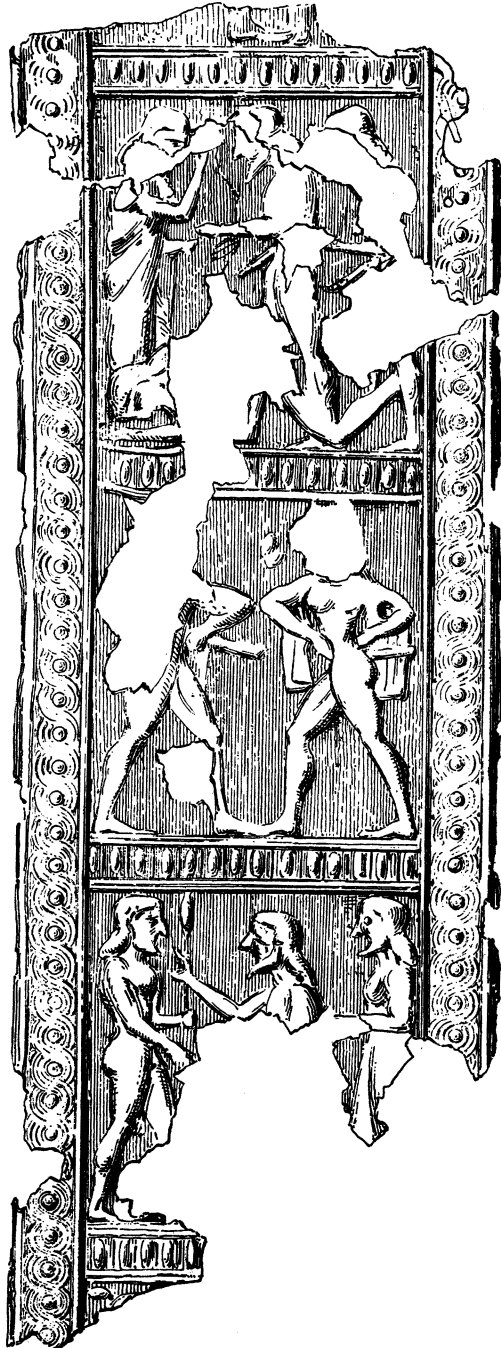
connection between the foot and the plainly-recognizable garment. Reisch has suggested that the figures may be those of Theseus and the Minotaur, a conjecture which cannot be proven. If this suggestion was correct, we would have here the type, which later became universal, with the Minotaur sinking to his knee, instead of the earlier type which represents him standing erect.⁴ A comparison with No. V shows that the subject was not unknown in this art. The kneeling figure is evidently of larger size than his opponent, a circumstance in favor of this supposition. The traces of a figure on the left side would have to be Ariadne.

The subject of the second square is easily recognized. It is the *Suicide of Ajax*. The hero, having thrown himself on his sword, which is planted in the earth, lies with his face to the ground: two Greeks (probably Odysseus and Diomedes) approach him from the left. The one to the left is beardless, his long hair, falling on his neck, seems fastened over his forehead by a band. The outline of his breast is no longer to be traced, nor is that of his left hand, which seems to have been extended at the height of his breast. His right hand, too, cannot be seen. We cannot determine whether the second Greek had a beard, and the position of his hands is uncertain. At the right end of the design are traces of what we are at first inclined to think a draped figure, but the sharpness of some of the intersecting lines makes us doubt this, and rather consider them to be crossed lances and other weapons. Perhaps here, as in other designs, the arms of Achilles are introduced. The beard of Ajax is plainly visible; his hair falls on his neck in a long mass divided by little lines, the hair on his forehead, too, is made with especial care. The suicide of Ajax is not rarely represented in an exactly similar manner, especially on Corinthian vases; comp. *Arch. Zeitung*, xxix, 1871, p. 59, 77 (H. Heydemann) and E. Pottier, in R. de Lasteyrie's *Album arch. des musées de province*, p. 72. To his careful enumeration are now to be added *Arch. Anzeiger*, 1891, p. 116, 5 (fragment of a Corinthian lekythos at Berlin), the relief described

⁴ Cf. *Arch. Zeitung*, 1884, p. 106 (FURTWÄNGLER); *Jahrbuch*, 1887, p. 22 (DÜMMER); *JHS*, xiv, pp. 210, 214 (C. SMITH). The tripod restored by PURGOLD (*Annali*, 1885, p. 167) would belong to it, too, if it were a certainty; but cf. FURTWÄNGLER, *Olympia*, iv, p. 88. The later examples in O. WULFF, *Zur Theseussage*, p. 30.

below under No. II, and A. Schneider, *Prolegomena zu einer neuen Gallerie heroischer Bildwerke*, p. 35 (fragment of a relief in Corneto). This last relief is connected with Argive and similar bronze-reliefs, as are the whole group of revetments of tomb-doors with vertical strips composed of decorated squares joined together.⁵

In the third square Herakles is represented in combat with the lion. He is apparently beardless, and certainly has short hair. He seizes the erect beast by the neck with his left hand, and with his right swings the knotty club. The lion has put his left fore-paw against the body of Herakles; the other paw seems not to be represented. His left hind-paw is on the ground, while



⁵ SEMPER, *Der Stil*, II, p. 407; FURTWÄNGLER, *Olympia*, IV, p. 104; *Notizie degli Scavi*, 1892, p. 472 (MILANI).

FIGURE 2.

the right seems to have been lifted and must have touched the knee of Herakles. The lion's mane and ribs are executed with especial care.⁶ The last square is occupied by two sphinxes seated opposite each other. They have carefully-executed long hair, and wings curved upward made with equal care. On their heads they wear an ornament composed of two short tendrils bent in opposite directions (*cf.* the relief on the handle of a Corinthian mirror, *Athen. Mittheilungen*, 1886, p. 76, 2; J. Ilberg, *Sphinx*, p. 7).

II. (National Museum, 6962. De Ridder, No. 349 and 352). FIGURE 2. Compare above p. 351. Present length $17\frac{1}{2}$ cm.; breadth, a little over 6 cm. This strip, too, has narrow edges (about 3 mm.) bent backwards so that they are perpendicular to the front surface. The work on this strip is far less subtle than on the first. What was in the topmost square cannot be determined. Nothing can be recognized except traces of a foot turned to the right in the middle of the lower part.

In the second square we see the death of Ajax again (comp. above p. 352). Apart from the fact that the design is turned toward the opposite side from that described in strip No. I, the attitude of the dead Ajax is the same except the position of the visible arm, which here touches the earth with the elbow. Here, also, Ajax seems to have a beard. Near him stand three Greeks, first to the left, at the head, a figure in a long garment who raises his right hand and extends his left at the height of his breast. At the corresponding place on the first strip we found indistinct traces which could hardly be shown to be a human figure; but we must confess that the analogy with this relief can be brought forward in favor of its being so considered. Two naked men advance from the right toward this figure. The foremost is certainly bearded, both have long hair. Their left arms are outstretched breast-high, while below appears an object, which may be a sword, directed obliquely from the upper right to the lower left.

In the third square are represented two men attacking one another. Both advance the leg furthest from the observer with exactly the same movement, and are in the act of drawing a sword

⁶ For this type, compare *Athen. Mittheilungen*, 1887, p. 121 (REISCH); ROSCHER'S *Lexikon*, I, 2, p. 2195 (FURTWÄNGLER).

with their right hand out of the scabbard held in their left. They are not in armor, but we can recognize a short garment lightly thrown around the shoulders of one of them: the scene therefore represents a sudden quarrel rather than a battle-scene. We can, then, assume with the greatest probability that it is the quarrel over the weapons of Achilles,⁷ although Ajax and Odysseus would be thus represented without the interposing Achæans.

The design on the fourth square can be easily identified, in spite of its damaged condition, as a corresponding one is twice preserved for us—on one of the bronze-reliefs from Olympia, and on a mirror in Berlin.⁸ It is the ransom of Hektor. Only a slight trace of the head of Hektor in the lower left-hand corner is preserved, but almost the whole figure of Achilles on the left. He is beardless and has long hair; his right hand hangs down, his left, lifted almost to the height of his breast, holds a lance, the point of which shows in front of his face. Only the upper part of the body of Priam is visible: he is bearded and long-haired; his right hand is lifted imploringly to Achilles. Behind him stands a naked youthful figure with long hair, his left arm bent at the elbow: from analogy with the Berlin mirror, we recognize him as Hermes.

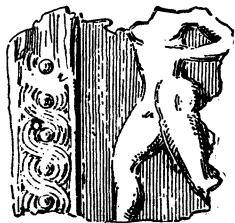


FIGURE 3.

The upper left-hand corner of another square is preserved, but no traces of the design on it.

It is worthy of remark that all the existing squares of this strip represent subjects from the Trojan myths. There may be intention in this, but need not necessarily be, as we learn from comparison with strip No. I, where the designs succeed one another with no apparent connection.

III. (National Museum, 6962. De Ridder, No. 356). FIGURE 3. This small fragment might very well, from its appearance, come from strip No. II, but of course we cannot arrive at any certainty about it. It is almost 3 cm. long, and equally broad; the little

⁷ Cf. ROBERT, *Bild und Lied*, p. 213. A. SCHNEIDER, *Der troische Sagenkreis*, p. 158.

⁸ Cf. FURTWÄNGLER in *Historische und philologische Aufsätze E. Curtius gewidmet*, p. 181; *Olympia*, IV, p. 103.

edge bent backward measures 3 mm. Nothing of the design on it remains except the traces of a male figure advancing to the left. By analogy with *Olympia*, iv, plate 39, 704*, p. 104, we can infer it to be a representation of the *Theft of the Tripod* (cf. Roscher's *Lexikon*, i, 2, p. 2214).

IV. (National Museum, 6960. De Ridder No. 359). We here

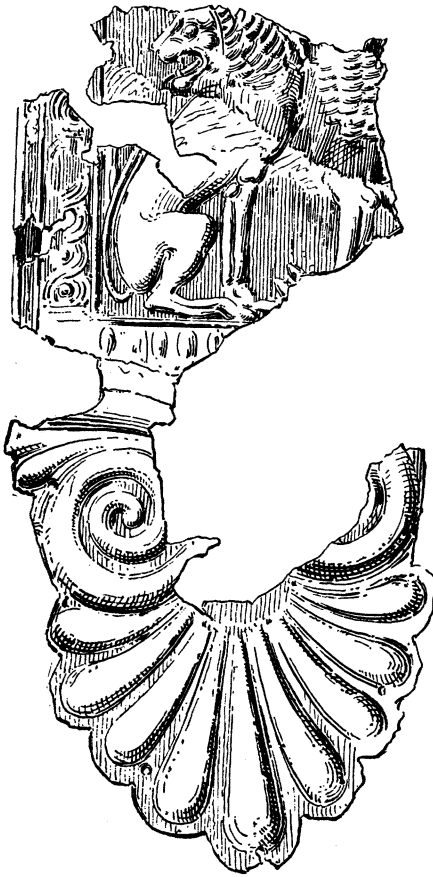


FIGURE 4.

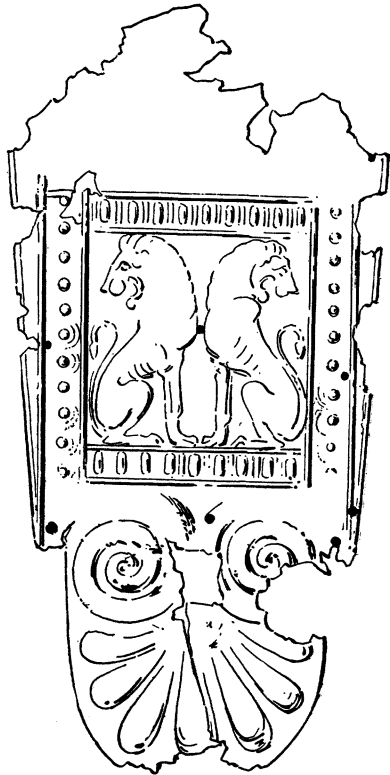
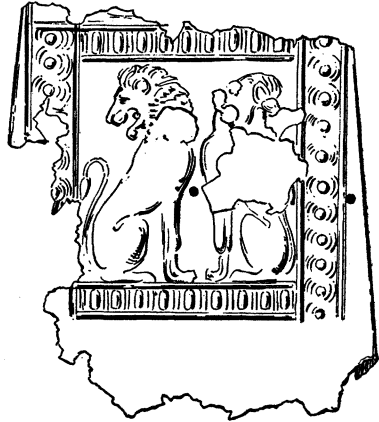
find the lower terminal of one of these strips in the fragment given in FIGURE 4. It is 11 cm. long, and was originally 7 cm. broad. It differs from those already treated by having a narrow plain strip outside the usual interlaced band, and a further narrow edge (4 mm.) which is bent entirely backward, not perpendicular to the front surface, as in the others, but folded back against it. The marks of nails on the edge show that it, too, was fastened to a wooden support.⁹ The work on this relief is careful, and more like that on No. I.

On the only square remaining are represented two lions seated symmetrically opposite each other. Under it is a simple palmette, and the metal is cut away to follow its outline. On account

of the traces on these reliefs of nailing to small pieces of wood

⁹ The way they were fastened on is clearly shown by one little fragment. It is the fragment of a palmette (like FIGURE 4), $4\frac{1}{2}$ cm. long and 5 cm. broad. The nail is still sticking in one of the little holes on the edge. It is a small, very carefully made sharp bronze pin almost 1 cm. long and little more than 1 mm. thick; the head is but little larger than the shank.

over whose sides their narrow edges were bent, traces here emphasized and also observed by others, we are forced to believe that they were used for covering larger objects, most probably wooden chests. It seems then most natural that the prolongation of some of these upright strips covered with the reliefs formed the feet of the chests. A free end, such as the palmettes pointing downward, seems not to suit this very well, yet it can be compared with the customary palmettes on the legs of thrones and couches (*klinai*). FIGURES 6 and 7 show two similar fragments also from the Acropolis (National Museum, 6964. De Ridder, No. 358 and 360), which evidently come from the same or from two similar bronze-coverings. The larger measures about 14 cm. in length and 7 cm. in breadth; the smaller is about 7 cm. long. Beside the twisted border there is a narrow plain space, the breadth of which, in this case, increases downward as well as upward. A narrow border here also is bent entirely backward; and, since it shows in one place, at least, that it and the front surface were pierced in the same place by a small nail, it is clear that its present position (in which this border is bent back against the reverse side) was the



FIGURES 6 AND 7.

original and intentional one. Two squares are preserved, identical in pattern, each having two symmetrical, seated lions. Under one of the squares a palmette is developed; above it the metal is visibly wider and is plain. We must assume a palmette on the upper part of the other fragment, and consider the two fragments as belonging together, as our drawing shows them. How much is wanting between them we cannot tell. Indeed, one must confess that it is not certain that they formed one piece. In fact, there is a fragment which came from the collection of the Archæological Society to the National Museum (No. 7866; De Ridder,

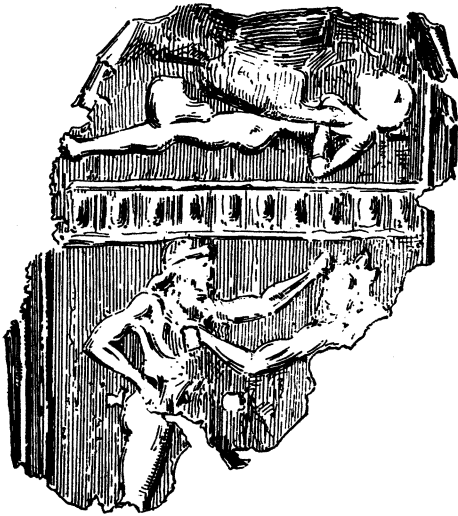


FIGURE 5.

Bronzes de la société arch. d'Athènes, No. 797), that strikingly resembles the fragment with the palmette, except that this palmette is broken off. It is altogether $12\frac{1}{2}$ cm. high, and is rounded off at the top in such a manner that the oblique lines of the sides are cut by the curved line of the top at an obtuse angle. This unorganic form cannot, of course, have been left

visible, and there are, in the empty space above the lions, four holes for nails with which at this point another piece was fastened over this one. These nails had round heads nearly one cm. in diameter, and therefore could not have served for fastening the bronze to the wood, which, as we have seen, was done with small fine pegs. One might suppose that, as here, so also in the Acropolis-fragments, the junction of the two pieces of bronze was effected by a strip of thin metal or other material.

V. (National Museum, 6961a. De Ridder, No. 351). FIGURE 5. Because of the striking representation on this fragment, I have

selected it from the somewhat varying classes of those decorative bronze-reliefs which exhibit lateral borders of simple lines in place of interlaced work. Its length is $6\frac{1}{2}$ cm.; breadth, $5\frac{1}{2}$ cm. It seems, from its workmanship as well as from the absence of the interlaced border, to belong to a later and less careful kind, but its damaged state prevents a conclusive opinion. A narrow border ($1\frac{1}{2}$ mm.) seems in this one, again, to have been perpendicular to the exterior surface. The remains of the two existing squares are not very distinct. In the upper one is a nude figure, stretched on the ground. That it is lying down is shown by the position of the left foot, which would not touch the ground, even if the square were turned around till the figure assumed a vertical position. Above the figure are indistinct traces, which may be of a bird whose head touches the shoulder of the figure, while its tail would be near his knee (*cf. Athen. Mittheilungen*, 1886, p. 88). But we would then be outside the sphere of myth, in opposition to what is customary in these reliefs, for Prometheus, whose figure would occur to us, is differently represented.¹⁰ Moreover, the other traces remaining would hardly adapt themselves to this conception. I am therefore inclined, after renewed investigation, to think that the object above the reclining man is a sphinx. I thought that I could recognize on the back of the relief, which is less destroyed by rust than the front side, faint traces of its head just over the head of the man, and its shoulders with wings bent upward can be conjectured also. The outline, which is shown in the illustration and is more plainly visible on the back side, would fit this supposition. There are visible the hind-quarters of the beast over the knee of the man (its hind-paws resting on his legs,¹¹ its fore-paws on his shoulders) and the front line of its breast. This design, more conjectured than seen, would correspond with representations like *Wiener Vorlegeblätter*, 1889, plate 9, 8. 11.¹²

The objection, that a square field would not be filled by this design and that it must have contained other standing figures, could also be brought against the first attempt at explanation.

¹⁰ *Cf. FURTWÄNGLER, Olympia*, IV, p. 102; *BCH*, 1892, p. 351 (HOLLEAUX).

¹¹ By a mistake, these hind-paws are not to be seen in our figure.

¹² *Cf. O. JAHN, Arch. Beiträge*, p. 117; *Athen. Mittheilungen*, 1879, p. 56 (MILCHHÖFER); BETHE, *Thebanische Heldenlieder*, p. 17; J. ILBERG, *Sphinx*, p. 22. 40.

The lower square, I think, represents the slaying of the Minotaur. To the left is a man who seizes the head of his opponent with his raised left hand, and this head seems to me to show the ear and horn of a beast. It must therefore be the Minotaur (compare above p. 352), whom Theseus has seized by the horn with his left hand, and threatens with his sword. The limitations of the space force us to the conclusion that the Minotaur was represented kneeling.

Athens, 1895.

PAUL WOLTERS.